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The History of Public Relations in China: A Western Comparison and Beyond

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2012

Honors Capstone Project in Public Relations

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Date: 4/25/12

Abstract

During my six month study abroad experience in Hong Kong, I became fascinated by the duality of China mainland and its “Special Administrative Region”, (Hong Kong) from a public relations perspective. With its one government, two system approach to politics, I sought to understand how the practice of public relations evolved in these two regions. Through literary analysis, personal interviews with public relations practitioners and personal observations during an internship in Hong Kong, I explore the development of the public relations practice in China and Hong Kong through first a western lens, and then through a global perspective.

My first analysis utilizes a western lens of comparison, using public relations models set forth by the alleged forefathers of public relations, James Grunig and James Hunt. I begin this section by defining the four models of public relations evolution as described by Gruing and Hunt. I then explore how public relations in China mainland has progressed through these four models and where it stands now. Similarly, I look at the history of public relations in Hong Kong, also relating to the four western models of the practice. Yet due to Hong Kong’s much younger history, I include both personal observations and interviews with current public relations practitioners as well.

Through case studies and other literary analysis I draw the conclusion that both Hong Kong and China have not quite achieved the most evolved or mature level of public relations practice, due to the lack of two-way, symmetrical communication in several key incidents. I then suggest that perhaps this western lens limits a thorough analysis of the public relations in a country that may not adhere to the same cultural, political, and economic contextual factors.

In my second perspective of public relations, I analyze the dangers of an ethnocentric approach, or the assumption that all practitioners around the globe should practice a western model of public relations. My analysis calls upon public relations scholars who suggest a more global approach and the main factors that influence its use. I conclude that measuring the evolution of public relations through a western standard does not always accurately capture the practice and meaning of its use in other cultures. It is the global exchange and observation of public relations practiced differently around the world that will continue to develop towards a best practice for each country or culture.

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Your guidance is much appreciated!

Advice to Future Honors Students

Dear Future Honors Students,

If you have decided to be a part of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University, let me first congratulate you on one of the best decisions you will make in college. Throughout my four years at Syracuse University, I have joined many clubs and took part in several different organizations. Although I learned from all of these activities and enjoyed them, none can quite compare to the benefits and experiences shared through the Honor's program. For me, the Honor's program was a constant. It was the one or two classes a semester that I knew I could look forward to. It was the lounge I could escape to for a quiet moment. It was the place where I made friends from different years and majors that would not have met otherwise. I am very grateful for the program and my time spent pursuing my Capstone.

I would like to provide future students with three suggestions as they embark on their own Capstone project.

1. Choose a topic that you are passionate about

The Capstone project will take a lot of time and a good amount of energy. Make sure that your topic is something that will sustain your interest. It is much easier to write a paper or execute your study on a topic that makes you excited to research and complete such an extensive deliverable.

2. Expand your Capstone in other aspects of college

One great way to keep your Capstone relevant and interesting is to consider bringing your topic into other aspects of your college career. For example, I knew that I wanted to focus on some aspect of public relations, but I was not set on a certain focus or perspective. As I planned to travel abroad to Hong Kong, I decided to look for ways to incorporate my Capstone into my abroad experience. Not only did my 6 months in Hong Kong provide me with the perfect opportunity to complete research and observe public relations in a different country first hand, but it broadened and improved my abroad experience as well.

3. Just stick with it!- Make a timeline.

In the midst of completing your majors and minors, it is easy to push your plans to complete the Capstone portion of the Honors experience aside. It is okay to take breaks from your project; it is a process. My advice is to make a "best case scenario" timeline for your project, by creating deadlines or benchmarks for yourself. Even if I did not make all of these personal deadlines, I found that it pushed and motivated me along the way.

All the best,

Jess

Chapter 1: Public Relations in China

Introduction

China and Hong Kong are often described as “One country, two systems”. This dichotomous relationship sometimes proves difficult to understand, especially when searching for the historical development of the two regions. Both tout controversial and dramatic pasts, often shaped by government controlled public relations. In its most simple definition, public relations may be described as the management of a relationship between an organization and its publics. Its function is to communicate, but its purpose varies throughout its history of development. I seek to explore the public relations industry in China Mainland and Hong Kong. Through four main models of public relations, market research and Chinese public relations case studies, I hope to shed light on how far China and Hong Kong have progressed in their use of PR, from the industry’s beginnings to the present, in both government and consumer sectors as well as local and multinational firms. After considering the public relations practices in China through a western lens, we look at the realities of public relations and the glaring fact that an ethnocentric approach to PR is no longer appropriate in a time of great globalization.

The Four Models of Public Relations

James Grunig and Todd Hunt present four models of public relations in their book, *Managing Public Relations*. The summaries below describe the modern development of PR in the United States, but each stage may be applied to other countries as well.

Press Agency: The objective is publicity. The main focus entails making sure people hear the information and gaining attention. It is purely one-way, from the organization to its public. Little research is involved. American circus owner PT Barnum employed the classic example of press agency. Copying politicians at the time, PT Barnum used stunts and gimmicks to garner attention, often spewing highly exaggerated claims and promises to his audience.

Public Information: The focus is on the accurate dissemination of information. The communication flow remains one-way. The public relations professional conducts research on the readability and level of comprehension of their message to its publics. Public service announcements are a very basic example of public information.

Advocacy: This model seeks to modify the attitudes of its publics and influence their behavior. The communication flow is two-way asymmetrical, as researchers focus on the attitude and opinion of the publics' reaction to the communicated message.

Relationship building: Mutual understanding between the organization and its publics becomes the main priority as well as mediating conflict resolution. There is a two-way symmetrical flow of communication. Research focuses on the perception and values of its publics. (*Grunig and Hunt, 1984*).

As we consider the developmental levels of public relations in China and Hong Kong through first a western lens, we look to Larissa A. Grunig and James E. Grunig to better understand the ideal form of public relations or example of excellence first. The fourth stage of relationship building indicated previously as the final, and most developed model of public relations, begins to explore the idea of excellence in public relations. In the Grunigs' book, "Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management", the authors pose a central research question: "What expertise can a public relations function offer, which other management functions cannot offer, that makes an organization more effective both in achieving its own goals and those of society?" (Grunig, p. 538). In doing so, they start by better defining the management function of public relations and what comprises the essential function described in their research question. The authors argue that excellent public relations departments interact with publics in a way that is both two-way symmetrical and symmetrical. In addition to disclosing relevant information to its publics, excellent public relation listens to its publics both informally and formally. A clear dialogue is present that is focused on preparing and managing conflict, building relationships and enhancing relationships. According to the Grunigs, excellent public relations departments are characterized by a "*professional base of knowledge*- especially the knowledge needed to play a managerial, strategic, symmetrical, and ethics role in an organization" (Grunig, p. 540). The authors then propose the question as to why most public practitioners do not practice public relations in this "excellent,

efficient way” (Grunig, p. 540). They explain that it is partly because of a lack of knowledge about how and why it is so important to practice public relations in this way. Now, with a starkly modern and western comparison fresh in one’s mind, we travel back in history to consider the evolution of public relations in China and Hong Kong.

Public Relations in China: Then

Throughout history, China’s government may be described as totalitarian. The government remains one of the greatest influences on the lives of most Chinese citizens. For this reason, a form of public relations first emerged in China by governmental use. I use the word “form” due to the fact that the Chinese government used a model that is described by Grunig and Hunt’s as “public information”. In its modern sense, it is widely believed that the public relations practice emerged in the 20th century in the United States and the United Kingdom. Yet according to Professor of Public Relations, Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, a growing number of scholars have explored the contention that public relations-like practices have actually been in existence even in pre-biblical times. For example, in Al-Badr’s “Public Relations in Asia: An anthology”, the author explains that public relations can be tracked back at least 4,000 years “as evidenced in a cuneiform tablet found in Iraq resembling a bulletin telling farmers how to grow better crops”, exemplifying a public information model of public relations (Sriramesh, p. 1). Sriramesh points to German scholars Bentele and Wehmeyer who traced the roots of ‘modern’ public relations in Germany to the

mid-nineteenth century. In fact, “[o]thers have done the same for several other countries of the world” (Sriramesh, p. 1).

Professor Ni Chin explains that one can trace the practice of public relations in its most basic sense, over 13 dynasties and the People’s Republic of China. Chin suggests that due to the importance of establishing a harmonious and relationship between the government and its public, emperors have long demonstrated the use of public relations .The author explains that the main priority of the Chinese emperor was the communication of a message to ensure harmony and stability, supporting their control over the country. She writes,

“The Rise and fall of these dynasties has illustrated the importance of recognizing the “harmony” concept—the establishment and maintenance of a harmonious relationship between the ruler and the subjects on whom his success or failure depended... For instance an emperor went to the ‘Temple of heaven’ on New Year’s eve to report to Heaven how he exercised his power benevolently and helped his subjects during the year. News about the report was sent to the people to gain their support and understanding” (Chen, p. 1, 1994).

If the forefathers of American Public Relations existed during this time,

Grunig and Hunt may have described this model of public relations as “Public Information”, which emerged in the early 1900s in the United States. This stage in the evolution of public relations is characterized by the honest dissemination of information and it is purely a one-way flow of communication. Depending on whether or not the information is actually correct, early deployment of public relations in China may fall under the publicity, or press agency model. The goal of this type of communication is the act of dissemination and capturing the

attention of the target audience (*Grunig and Hunt, 1984*). Again, it is a one-way flow, from the individual with power to the public.

Following Grunig & Hunt's evolution of public relations in the United States, the Chinese government utilized several forms, beginning with the most basic and ethically debatable. From 1949 to 1979, China's small political elite "used propaganda, military might and police brutality. Mass participation was minimal" (Culbertson, p. 1). Under the former leader of the Communist Party, Mao Zedong created Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. He made sure that every Chinese citizen knew and understood these principles, which helped Mao create and sustain a positive image with the people.

The Three Main Rules of Discipline are as follows:

- (1) Obey orders in all your actions.
- (2) Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.
- (3) Turn in everything captured.

The Eight Points for Attention are as follows:

- (1) Speak politely.
- (2) Pay fairly for what you buy.
- (3) Return everything you borrow.
- (4) Pay for anything you damage.
- (5) Don't hit or swear at people.
- (6) Don't damage crops.
- (7) Don't take liberties with women.
- (8) Don't ill-treat captives.

(Marxist Internet Archive, 2011)

The top-down structure of government claimed to encourage a “mass line” or socialist trending policy that understood and met the needs of the people. In reality, no communication or dialogue existed between the government and the people. The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the end of the Cultural Revolution caused a dramatic transition in Chinese history. People began to question the government and demand information about the workings of institutions that created the policies, which shaped their lives (Culbertson, p. 1). Mistrust and lack of support for the government swept through the country, claiming corruption and inefficiency. The government recognized the “strongly felt need for public participation in decision making-and citizen dialogue with government- resulted. New methods were needed” (Culbertson, p. 2). The government understood the importance of communicating with its people effectively. China looked to the western concept of public relations and borrowed foreign theories and practices (Chinese Media Research, 2009).

The emergence of PR departments and personnel in institutions and companies first came about in the 1960s in Taiwan and Hong Kong due to less strict political and economic factors. In the 1970’s, public relations became professionalized in these two regions. As discussed earlier, major political change came about in 1978, when the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the communist Party of China established the reform and opening up policy. This policy made function of public relations known to the Chinese.

According to Professor Chen, it was not until the 1980’s that the Western public relations concepts and practice came to fruition in China. Changes in

political ideology as well as changes in the economic system made this shift possible. Chen describes the development of public relations in China as a multidimensional process seen in five clear phases:

- Introduction
- Upsurge
- Rethinking
- Declining
- Professionalism

In Chen's prescribed *introduction* phase, many of the western concepts and roles of public relations were confused and misunderstood. Chen writes that public relations "was thought of virtually as a substitute for interpersonal relations and network-building- *gao gainxi*- and as a new way help get things done" (Freitag, p. 141). Geographically, the majority of public relations departments emerged during the 1980's in the coastal areas of Mainland China. Foreign companies with joint ventures in China supported the creation of Public Relations Departments to mirror their overseas counterparts. These initial departments recruited public relations practitioners and began their own public relations businesses. The hotel industry led the way in the use of public relations as a function of management and acted as the model example (Chinese Media Research, 2009). According to Chinese Media Research, the "best-known activities of early PR were staged by the Beijing Great Wall Hotel when former US President Reagan held his return banquet there on April 28th, 1984. Five-hundred journalists came from all over the world and the president made the hotel a household name of the world" (Chinese Media Research, 2009). State-owned

enterprises recognized the value of a public relations function and followed suit. Most notably, the Guangzhou Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical Factory set up a PR department in state-owned enterprises that successfully implemented PR activities and helped shape the profession in China (China Media Research, 2009).

The next stage, described by Chen as the *upsurge*, marked an increase of awareness and interest in the public relations field. The mid-1980s marked the arrival of established international PR firms in China. With widening reforms and an increase of international business, China became a magnet for high-profile PR firms around the world. Hill & Knowlton was the first company to open an office in Beijing in 1984, followed by Burson-Marsteller in 1985. In fact, Burson-Marsteller joined forces with the China Press Development Company to establish the first Chinese PR firm, Chinese Global Public relations (Chinese Media Research, 2009). The building of PR organizations and institutions characterized the public relations industry in China for the next eight years. A professional association such as the Guangdong Public Relations Club was founded in 1986 along with the Shanghai Public Relations Association (CPRA) in the same year.

Despite the obvious enthusiasm for the new PR industry, trained personnel was in short supply. According to Professor Chen, the field lacked the structure, curricula in education and professional training to provide for the new profession. Most Chinese practitioners gained experience from their western partners who received public relations training elsewhere. Organizations such as the CPRA began offering workshops and seminars to help train the emerging public relations professionals. Finally in June of 1987, the government recognized the need to

institutionalize public relations training and education and created the First National Public Relations Seminar. Participants suggested that the Chinese Ministry of Education appoint universities to offer PR courses and develop PR majors. In 1989, the Ministry of Education approved of the inclusion of public relations education in universities (Chen, p. 3, 1994). The new education and training translated into a great period of growth and development in the mid 1980's. PR publications and academic research flourished, supporting the need for training such as the class introduced by the Shenzhen General Labor Union in January of 1985. By 1986, more than 300 universities including Fudan University, Zhongshan University, Lanzhou University, Shanghai International Studies University, Hangzhou University introduced PR to their curricula (Chinese Media Research, 2009).

In the journal article *From Propaganda to Public Relations, Evolutionary Change into the Chinese Government*, Professor Ni Chin explores the government's use of PR and its movement away from propaganda towards the modern-day definition of public relations. Yet while her research shows that respondents define the government public relations as two-way symmetrical and relationship building, a closer look at the implementation of PR activity reveals a one-way, less mature public relations model. The public relations used by the government in reaction to the Tiananmen Square Massacre reveals the propaganda or press agency style model expressed by Professor Chen. The government sought to dispel and quiet all negative images and communication surrounding the massacre in June of 1989, fearing a damaged reputation abroad.

This event marked the *rethinking stage*, in which Chinese leadership “blamed imported ideas and practices from the west, and thus called for “rethinking of them” (Freitag, 141). In 1990, the Chinese government held a special conference to discuss what strategies to use, paying special attention to western readers. Chinese reported this as a “conference on the work of overseas publicity”, not as a meeting on “propaganda” (Kristof, 1990). The conference resulted in The International Public Relations Association of China, a creation of a new office specifically charged with the task of creating and implementing overseas propaganda in 1991. The office purposely delayed trials of the alleged protestors from the Tiananmen Square Massacre until the Persian Gulf War broke out, and as a result, successfully ignored the trials in the press (Culbertson, p. 4). These events marked the “socialist public relations with Chinese features” which “came into being” (Freitag, p. 141). Chen explains that this new attitude discouraged Western public relations into Chinese practice and it required close state supervision. The government did not ban the modern public relations all together, but the development of the practice clearly stalled in China. Chen points to the political confusion and power struggle between liberals and conservatives a result of the stunted public relations practice.

From 1992-2000, China entered a *declining stage* of public relations, spiraling from the Tiananmen Square Massacre. About a third of the public relations firms and departments of large businesses were eliminated. In 1989, the number of newspapers and journals dedicated to the industry declined 33 publications to just two (Freitag, p.141). Although shrinking internally, this period

of time did see an increase of exchange between domestic and overseas public relations markets. In 1991 the China International Public Relation Association (CIPRA) launched biennial conferences to promote the exchange between Chinese and foreign experts. Education saw some advances as well. The primary options available to students of public relations included short term training by professionals working in the field, short-course programs through the internet, two year certificate programs offered by vocational schools and four-year university and college degree programs (Chen, p. 3, 1994). These efforts helped thrust China into the international PR landscape and expand when the Third Plenary Session of the CPC 11th Central Committee passed “a number of decisions on the establishment of a socialist market economic system” in 1993 (Chinese Media Research, 2009).

As discussed earlier, Chinese universities and government officials welcomed and sought the expertise of western public relations professionals. A personal experience from Professor David Ritchey in 1997 reveals a disconnect between American public relations and its practical use in Chinese culture. Ritchey was invited to teach Public Relations in Renmen University’s Department of International politics in Beijing. He was asked to teach the first western-style public relations class in China. His hosts explained that other schools did offer public relations courses, but they were Chinese-style, government oriented public relations. Reflecting on his time in China he writes:

The students learned that in most western countries anyone may take a news release or a story idea to the media. They seemed surprised to learn that governments have public relations or

public information or public affairs officers. "Including your government," I said. The room became very quiet. On the final exam, a student wrote the best sentence I've ever read: "What does it matter if the road is long and dull, if the alcohol is good" (Ritchey, p. 28).

With a history of consensus and harmony as top priority, opinions such as the one expressed above should come as no surprise. The student did not see the value in free speech and an open marketplace of ideas where truthful information may be brought to a news outlet's attention. The communist sentiment that the government knows what is best for the general public permeates his political views and that as long as the people are moderately comfortable, why make a fuss? It appears that throughout the nineties, trying to teach and practice a western form of public relations that was created within the realms of a democratic political system, did not transition seamlessly into one with communist and totalitarian sentiment. Scott Kronick *North Asia President*, Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide and S.I, Newhouse School graduate at Syracuse University, explained that PR in China has four needs.

"First, awareness and education campaigns— as awareness and understanding of companies, their brands, products are much lower than in western markets." Second government access and influence. The government permeates every sector of the Chinese economy. "Third, information and understanding — market research to help client understand the complexities of what is happening here. "Fourth, client support and event management. Many clients know what they want to do. They just don't know how to do it in China. We support them in their efforts and help implement such activities." (Ritchey. P. 28)

Between Ritchey's observations in the classroom and Kronick's experience in the field, it appears that the late nineties and early millennium called for a compromise between increasing education on western principles of PR and the reason for its use as well as assimilating these ideas into the Chinese culture with a local and inclusive perspective.

Multinational Public Relations companies entered the China PR market in the 90's, setting up joint ventures or establishing their own offices. These companies included Edelman, Ogilvy and Fleishman Link Consulting (Chinese Research Media, 2009). The maturation of the Public relations industry continued when China joined the World Trade Organization, and in 2007, the Survey Report on Chinese Public Relations Industry highlighted China's continued momentum and rapid growth with an annual market turnover of more than 10.8 billion RMB, increasing by 2.8 billion over the previous year (Chinese Media Research, 2009).

Public Relations in China: Now

The Chinese Media Research of 2009 paints a thoroughly positive picture of the public relations industry in China. A natural progression and implementation of supporting structure appears from its beginnings, yet a deeper understanding of public relations' usage requires tangible examples. Furthermore, evolution of the public relations function from press agency to two-way symmetrical communication model marks the true test of maturation and requires education on these principles. Chen's final stage of *revitalization*, reflects the

research's findings, agreeing that the new millennium brought some positive change to the practice in China and opportunities for growth and improvement.

In 2008, the Olympics in Beijing revealed serious challenges with the Chinese government's use of public relations. The Chinese government looked at the 2008 Olympic Games as the perfect platform to showcase the progress of China's reform and opening policies. Working with U.S. based Burson-Marsteller, one of the world's leading public relations firms, the Olympics committee launched campaign strategy for China, communicating "isolation versus engagement" and that China should be "engaged" (Freitag, 143). Yet international Non Government Organizations (NGOs) with serious complaints against the PRC also capitalized on their moment in the spotlight to raise awareness on issues of human rights and the environment as well as China's relations with Taiwan, Tibet and Sudan (Gilligan, p. 34). Issues usually overlooked had the chance for international exposure. But the Chinese government's control of all internal media outlets silenced these issues, undermining the NGOs' efforts. Furthermore, the government communicated to the people of China that the international NGOs were attacking China, [arousing] nationalism and resentment towards forces described as seeking to limit China's peaceful rise and development" (Gilligan, p. 34). Once again, the Chinese government reverts back to its propaganda producing roots.

Throughout the Beijing Olympics, it appears obvious that the U.S. media conveyed a critical attitude towards the Chinese government. The media exposed China's failures and shortcomings as the host country of the Games, blaming the

government for unattained standards. American news media focused on the Chinese government's attempt to create the image of a “New China” and the deception that ensued as a result of that effort. Impressions of diversity and perfection cracked as the media uncovered scandal after scandal. Although American media exercised a critical attitude towards the Chinese government overall, the degree of bias and slant differed amongst various news publications.

During the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, ethnically dressed children paraded around the Chinese national flag. The official program announced the group as racially diverse, but a spokesperson from the Galaxy Children’s Art Troupe later admitted their true ethnicity. According to a Times article, “[t]here were no Uighurs, no Zhuangs, no Huis, no Tujias, no Mongols and definitely no Tibetans...[a]ll 56 (children) were revealed to be Han Chinese, who make up more than 90 percent of the country’s 1.3 billion people” (Macartney, para. 3). The Times' disapproval towards this display of fakery is clear in its interview of Wang Wei, the vice president of the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee. Wei comments, “I think you are being very meticulous...It is rather normal and usual for actors and actresses to be dressed in costumes from different ethnic groups. There is nothing special about it” (Macartney, para. 5). Macartney then illustrates the vice president as attempting to “brush the latest revelation aside” (Macartney, 2008, para. 5). The image of Wei's dismissal of the accusations as trite further supports the media's critical portrayal of the Chinese government.

The Wall Street Journal offers a more objective account of the Han Children incident by providing the opinions of Chinese civilians. The article explains that in China, “neither the Han nor minorities appear to see much of a problem with the custom, viewing it as a way to preserve cultural diversity” (Leow, para. 10). Leow even draws a connection to the U.S. custom of non-American Indians performing in traditional American Indian attire at various events (Leow, 2008, para. 10). Contrary to the Times' negative assessment of the treatment of minorities in China, The Wall Street Journal article provides information that suggests the opposite. Wang Ping, founder of the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park, received government grants to help with funding. The culture park is open for the public to learn about minority cultures (Leow, 2008, p. 1). One may account for the differing degree of bias between the two articles in that according to the New York Times, “[T]he Wall Street Journal first reported that the children actually were members of the Han majority” (Kolata, 2008, para. 2). Perhaps bearing the responsibility as the first newspaper to announce the scandal required a more objective account of the opening ceremony.

The subject of human rights and the Chinese government's role in protecting the freedoms of its people appeared frequently in the news throughout the Games. The New York Times' decision to publish an interview of Ai Weiwei, renowned Chinese artist who helped design the Beijing National Stadium, or the Bird's Nest, demonstrates the paper's critical view of the Chinese government. Although the article pursues the opinion of a non-American, the Chinese artist is an “outspoken critic of the Chinese government policies on civil liberties and

other issues” (Zhang, 2008, para. 1). After answering questions about the design of the Bird's Nest, Zhang prompts Weiwei to clarify his coining of the phrase “pretend smile” to describe China's Olympic effort. The artist explains that he did not think it possible for a Communist nation to gain international approval or recognition when its government continues to deny citizens basic human rights (Zhang, 2008, para. 1). While there “are all kinds of efforts under way that are means for stricter and tighter control,” Weiwei asked, “how can one smile and perform, cheer and pose,” (Zhang, 2008, para. 2). News coverage about labor camp threats towards protestors during the Olympics validates Weiwei's statements about the government's restriction of civil liberties. Two Chinese women, Wu Dianyuan, 79, and Wang Xiuying, 77, may face a year of “reeducation through labor” because they applied for permits to protest the official who had evicted them from their homes in 2001 (Cha, 2008, para. 2). After persistent inquiry about the permit, the two women received a letter announcing restriction of their movements and the threat of labor camp. According to Fox News, the police received 77 applications to protest and none were approved (Labor Camp, 2008, p. 1). Wu Dianyuan's son commented, “We are a communist society, with the people the leaders and owners, but basic citizens' rights cannot even be realized today. How sad it is” (Cha, 2008, para. 9). Due to international pressure, the Chinese government decided to allow protests in three parks during the Games. The Washington Post article, demonstrating a negative slant against the Chinese government, does not provide any statements from Chinese officials, but instead focuses on the reactions of civilians involved.

By comparing different American news sources communicating the same stories, a pattern of negativity towards the Chinese government appears. In fact, these “stories” are more often described as scandals. Reporting on the redirection of water for the Olympics which cut off supply to farmers, the Times says, “officials are now trying to cover up a grotesque scandal of blunders, lies and repression” (Sheridan, 2008, para. 1). The realization that the Chinese girl who sang during the opening ceremony was lip synching for a less attractive girl caused headlines like one found in the Washington Times, “Olympics lip-synching hits low note 'Scandal' pits East vs. West” (Harper, 2008, p. 1). Overall, American news media portrayed a critical stance towards the Chinese government and its public relations efforts throughout the games, focusing on its treatment of its citizens and its attempt to deceive the international community.

In the event of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, a select few international public relations firms and Multi National Corporations (MNCs) operating in China demonstrated effective use of a matured public relations model and learned a very good lesson. Three months before the Olympics, an earthquake devastated Wenchuan, Sichuan. Out of respect for such hard times, international NGOs ceased their attacks on the government surrounding the 2008 Olympics. According to Gilligan, the “[n]ationalist sentiment [which] previously focused on international NGOs, mixed with an overwhelming sense of anguish and grief for victims of the earthquake, refocused on foreign companies” (Gilligan, p. 34). They accused foreign companies of benefiting from China’s moment of weakness in light of the earthquake and flocked to the Internet to express this accusation.

Most MNCs did nothing, and in doing so failed to communicate the truth about their positive involvement and charitable support. “A few companies, however, realized their problem was deeply political. To address the challenge, companies needed to reach out to the CCP, PRC government agencies, domestic NGOs and trade associations, the media, and directly... Though only a few companies reacted effectively to the crisis, all of the alleged iron roosters eventually benefitted from those more effective efforts to convince the PRC government that they had mutual interest in setting the record straight” (Gilligan, p. 34). Effective use of two-way symmetrical communication resulted in a positive outcome for both parties.

In the journal article “Effective Public Relations in China, Communications strategists must consider China’s media, market forces and government structure to get their message across effectively”, Gregory P. Gilligan provides a list of “Dos and Don’ts” for Public Relations in China:

Public Relations in China: Dos and Don’ts		
Do <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understand China’s vertically integrated and complex power structure and all stakeholders; ■ Create public relations (PR) messaging that demonstrates commercial goals aligned with the objectives of Chinese government and society; ■ Determine whether a behind-the-scenes influencer may be driving issues in unexpected ways; ■ Map the complex web of stakeholders needed to address each issue; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engage proactively before critical need emerges; ■ Train PR and government relations employees to work together closely; and ■ Track and evaluate PR performance and adjust strategies accordingly. Don’t <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Don’t simply follow a Western model for PR strategy. Organizational structure and employee function should reflect local conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Don’t shy away from engagement—PR is a contact sport. ■ Don’t wait for challenges to go away by themselves. The stakeholder environment in China is too complex and the rise of Internet use and social media guarantees challenges will spin out of control. ■ Don’t forget to consider capitalist and socialist approaches when assessing a situation.
—Gregory P. Gilligan		

The examples provided in this paper suggest that the most current and significant elements characterizing the present state of public relations in China

are “DO understand China’s vertically integrated and complex power structure and all stakeholders” and “Don’t simply follow a Western model for PR strategy. Organizational structure and employee function should reflect local conditions” (Gilligan, p. 34).

While international and private PR institutions persist to grow and develop in China, government PR practices lag behind, sometimes reverting back to the very basic, and one might add unethical, models of public relations. They have mastered consumerist PR, yet when it comes to the government and public information, officials only tell the public what they want them to believe. Chen points to five major factors that may contribute to the revitalization of public relations in China. First, there is a growing public pressure for transparency, and the government as well as businesses rely on their public relations professionals for response to the increasing skepticism. In order to lift this veil, functions such as procurement, recruitment, accounting and other operating function would have to be made public. Both the government and organizations realized quickly that this type of thorough disclosure required the expertise of public relations professionals. The second pressure was realized as media systems became less “shackled” (Freitag, p. 144). Media relations became a priority in both sectors, especially as technological advances of going online provided a more efficient and cost effective communication vehicle. Chen describes the third revitalization factor as the internationalization of Chinese business that convinced leaders of the importance in the public relations practice, especially when considering the integrated marketing communication model that had gained attention. Fourth, the

decentralization of the government and diversifying businesses, public advocacy has “intensified” (Freitag, p. 144). The government and businesses now must strategically craft responses to nongovernmental organizations speaking out about issues such as environmental protection, labor, anti-fraud and medical care. Public relations professionals who specialize in crisis communications and other expert areas of the function now see a demand for their services. Finally, according to Chen, the revitalization of public relations in China is evident and emerging because the field of public relations “has been formally incorporated by the government into higher education. The Ministry of Education has accorded considerable flexibility to public relations programs in universities” (Freitag, p. 144). A 2007 study reported that in Shanghai, four universities offer bachelor-degree programs in public relations, and one offers a master’s degree as well. Projected enrollment suggests 200 graduates each year for the public relations industry in Shanghai (Freitag, p. 144).

Chapter 2: Public Relations in Hong Kong

Public relations in Hong Kong emerged in the late 1960's under British colonial rule. With this international assistance, the Hong Kong industry developed similar to that of China Mainland, though without its motherland's propagandist agenda of a totalitarian government. It was not until the 1997 handover that Hong Kong experienced severe mismanagement in the government public relations sector when crisis struck. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak that same year revealed the poor political PR practices by the government. According to Professor Betty K. Lee of City University of Hong Kong, the government failed to achieve the two main goals of crisis management: containing the crisis and affecting the public opinion process. Lee explains that the government did not issue any public warnings about how to prevent and detect the disease, the government did not execute an isolation policy for individuals effected, there was a clear absence of a figure head to respond to continuous public reprimands, there was an absence a media spokesperson, the government demonstrated an attitude of denial and they demonstrated poor media management (Lee, p. 205). She writes,

“The response of the SAR government in the SARS crisis reflected the adoption of the ‘public information model’ in a number of ways. In an attempt to control the outflow of negative information, the government only reported ‘the number of contracted medical staff’ to the public in mid-March, when in fact there were two other categories in the

files*namely, the ‘number of contracted family members of medical staff ’ and the ‘number of contracted visitors to hospital’. The GIS discreetly added the ‘number of contracted cases in the community’ on its website the next morning after the divulgence of the cover-up by the media” (Lee, p. 207).

The government’s poor use of the public information model exposes serious concerns about the government PR during this time, and resulted in over half a million people demanding the resignation of President Tung Chee Hwa. He stepped down in 2005, making way for Donald Tsang. According to Lee, Tsang is “flamboyant, extrovert and articulate and deals well with the media” (Lee, p, 208). Having served in both colonial and post colonial governments, he demonstrated “a more conscious display of PR efforts than his predecessor...in terms of monitoring and creating public relations” (Lee, p. 208). Tsang demonstrates relationship building PR as he can be seen paying daily visits to communities, shaking hands with the public and writing on his personal blog on his website. Lee applauds the movement away from a passive public information model and the “resumption of a proactive one”, but she stipulates that Tsang must accommodate the public expectations and not manipulate in order to proceed towards a “two-way codetermining” public relations practice (Lee, p. 208). With room for improvement, Hong Kong demonstrates a progressive and still developing model of government public relations.

Public Relations Organizations and Accreditation

The most prominent PR organization within Hong Kong is the Council of Public Relations Firms in Hong Kong (cPRf). The cPRf works to promote best practices among the members of public relations firms and its stakeholders within Hong Kong. It is comprised of 25 consultancies that have in total estimated fees of more than HK \$ 360 million. cPRf provides a forum for firms in Hong Kong to establish industry standards and goals, through accreditation, education, training and competitions. The Council meets regularly to discuss industry ethics and to address other business professionals, as well as liaise with the government. The Board of Directors is made up of seasoned public relations professionals' active in the field.

The cPRf Accreditation began in 2003, aimed at creating a transparent quality management system for public relations consultancies in Hong Kong. The accreditation provides clients and government bodies a consistent evaluation tool to assess the quality and ability of public relations services in Hong Kong.

Members of cPRf HK must gain accreditation in order to maintain their membership status and participate in an audit every three years.

The accreditation standard was based on the Public Relations Consultants Association accreditation, a professional body representing UK public relations consultancies. The Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency tested and conducted trials for the standard as well.

The accreditation system addresses the following aspects:

Client relationships	- Management
- Campaign administration	- Team experience and training
- Services	- Finance and administration
- Creativity	- Ethics
- Corporate information	- Premises

The mission statement of the Council of Public Relations Firms of Hong Kong is to encourage the advancement of member public relations consultancies through the promotion of best practices

Objectives

- To raise and maintain professional and ethical standards in consultancy practice.
- To devise and promote an approved quality standard as a membership prerequisite.
- To confer and interact with Government, public bodies, associations representing industry, trade and others.
- To promote confidence in public relations consultancy and, consequently, in public relations as a whole, and to act as a voice for consultancy practice.
- To educate potential clients into recognizing the professionalism of members who conform to our Professional Charter and quality standard.
- To promote the registration of members and the Professional Practices Committee which oversees standards and arbitrates on complaints.
- To provide a forum for discussion on key PR industry issues.
- To demonstrate the effectiveness of good PR in consultancy work.

- To help members improve their efficiency, understanding, skills, professionalism and ethics.
- To increase opportunities for members to develop new business.
(Council of Public Relations Firms in Hong Kong website)

Interviews

In a personal interview with the Membership and PR co-director of the cPRf Board of Directors, Patrick Yu explained that the council is not a regulatory body. Instead, the goals of the council include establishing industry standards and educating the Hong Kong community on the function of public relations and how it ties into overall business strategy.

“A lot of people still only associate PR with event planning and celebrity publicity. They don’t realize the potential of other PR practices like corporate communications and crisis management,” says Yu. “As for the future of the industry in Hong Kong, the PR basics will always be bread and butter, but the growth areas are in digital communications and crisis management”

Angie Amberg, Managing Supervisor at Fleishman-Hillard International Public Relations Firm, echoed Patrick Yu’s projections. While on a visit to the Hong Kong office from the United States Amberg prepared a short presentation to provide the HK office with an idea of the sort of projects her team works on back in the U.S. She described a campaign they implemented for Poppa John’s pizza

company which entailed a highly tracked (by social media) road trip across the United States to visit key places (farms, factories, ect.) that contribute to the company as well as a search for the owner's long lost Chevy Camero. The campaign incorporated augmented reality, a new technology in which live direct or an indirect view of a physical, real-world environment whose elements are *augmented* by computer-generated sensory input, such as sound or graphics. For the Poppa John's campaign, FH designed an augmented reality feature of a Camero on top of all delivery boxes, and when placed in front of web cam, the computer was able to read this "barcode". The image of a Camero appeared on the screen that was moveable in order to create the feeling that you were driving the car. This is just one example of the creative measures FH implemented for the Poppa John's campaign. Social media proved to be another integral part of the campaign, with the goal of continuously gaining attention of their target audience and generating buzz in the media.

The Hong Kong office was impressed with Angie's presentation and asked a lot of questions surrounding her use of social media in the campaign. Apparently in Hong Kong, clients are less willing to use social media than in the United States. For using a social media site, like Facebook, allows people to comment and voice their candid opinions about the said product or service. If complaints or negative comments are made, the company risks losing control of their positive image. Yet Angie pointed out that restricting this two-way communication model defeats the very purpose, and positive power of social

media. She commented that Hong Kong seems to be just one year behind the U.S. in terms of social media usage by companies and their level of comfort.

Although it seems obvious that the Hong Kong community supports social media, businesses appear a bit more cautious. One can sympathize with companies who fear losing control by giving consumers a platform to voice their opinions about the good/service, but it can also be looked at as a way to learn immediately what consumers want and don't want; it is a means to bettering your product/service. Angie's presentation highlights Patrick Yu's commentary on Hong Kong's emerging trend and need for more digital communications and crisis management (Personal observation during internship with Fleishman-Hillard). It also reflects how the consumer PR industry in Hong Kong has nearly reached the two-way symmetrical relationship building model, and continues to progress towards maturation. Bob Pickard, president and chief executive officer for Burson- Marsteller Asia- Pacific has spent over ten years working in public relations throughout the region. Pickard recognizes this dilemma of trying to control content, yet explains that the credibility of social media comes from open and honest dialogue (Pickard, personal interview).

Applying a western definition of an evolution of public relations in China and Hong Kong, the two regions appear to move along on the same continuum, but at two very different points. Hong Kong far surpasses that of China mainland, as they try appeal to the PR needs of their people and also the expectations of the world community. Though China has opened its doors to consumerist freedom, the country drags its feet in all other respects. Hilary Clinton recognizes their

efforts to maintain their precious state of “harmony” saying, “They’re worried, and they are trying to stop history, which is a fool’s errand... “They cannot do it. But they’re going to hold it off as long as possible” (Appelbaum, 2011). We look to the continued education efforts and influence from both local and international PR firms to lead by example, demonstrating the benefits of a matured public relations model based on two-way, symmetrical communication.

Journals/Personal Case Studies

As the history of PR in Hong Kong is much shorter, I include my personal journal of case studies. Below is a compilation of observations and examples of public relations in Hong Kong during my five-week internship at Fleishman-Hillard, an international public relations firm based in the U.S.

WEEK 1

Greetings from Hong Kong! I’m in the final stretch of the HK Study Abroad program, and very excited to be coming back to Syracuse. This wouldn’t be a complete journal entry from a student on a study abroad program if I didn’t confess how this experience has changed me, the way I see the world, my life direction and my purpose. I think Hong Kong has done some of those things, and to be completely vague, I can tell you with absolute certainty, that this city is totally different from the U.S., and really kind of the same too.

For the last five weeks, I am interning with Fleishman-Hillard, an International Public Relations Firm. Ending my second week today, I finally feel like I am settling in and getting a better feel for the “FH culture”. Fleishman is an American company, though I am one of two Americans in the office. Most employees are from Hong Kong, London and Canada. There is a slight culture

barrier, but I have found that as long as I am open and make an attempt to socialize, I am welcomed into the conversation. Today I was even asked to lunch by two colleges!

My “American-ness” has never been so apparent. Yesterday I worked on a creative project that revealed my need to remember the number one rule when working on a campaign: KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE; and please remember your publics. For this particular project, a Hong Kong insurance firm wanted to launch an employee-share program, a sort of long-term investment strategy for the firm. The insurance firm reached out to FH for help on developing an internal promotional campaign for the new program. I was to develop a series of four teaser statements and a resolution statement that would be sent to employees for four consecutive days (basically like spam...). The firm explained that they needed a simple and clear message that compared the employee share program to owning pieces of the company. I worked with the graphic designer to brainstorm potential images and taglines for the promotion. The firm provided one metaphor that they liked. They suggested the idea of “having a piece of the cupcake”. Now, to me, I would never have a “piece” of a cupcake. I would have a “bite” of a cupcake, or let us be honest; I would have the “whole” cupcake. But the Hong Kong audience draws different meaning from the word “piece”. To HKers, comparing the concept of having a "piece" of a cupcake to buying a share in a company makes total sense. I balked at this analogy and then caught myself thinking about how I should probably be eating only a “piece” of cupcake from now on. But THE POINT IS: When you are in a new culture, working for in new

country or communicating within an new industry, it is so important to be aware of your own personal bias and to focus on understanding your publics and they way they interpret messages.

Here, in my first week, I encounter the public relations firm and immediately sense the culture barrier and the fact that my western lens is no longer adequate. Although an American-based firm, many of its clients are local businesses or international businesses based in Hong Kong. My encounter with the word choice for the insurance firm, APA, reminded me that when developing a message for a certain public, you must always consider the local culture of that public. I still wore my western lens and had not learned of the distinct cultural aspect of Asian cuisine. In general, meals are eaten together with friends or family and shared “family style”. One may consider the round rotating discs that the food is placed and then enjoyed all together. Knowing about this custom would have saved me from the confusion of word choice in this specific task.

WEEK 2

I finally feel like I am settling in and getting a better feel for FH in Hong Kong. There is a slight culture barrier, but I have found that as long as I am open make an attempt to socialize, I am welcomed into the conversation. Today I was even asked to lunch by two colleges. My office-mate, Alex, and I have made acquaintances, going through the normal “getting to know you routine, just as if I were in the States. We discussed college, areas of study, travel, and living in Hong Kong in general. I felt a bit overwhelmed during my first two days here, not

knowing how to connect with my colleagues. I was pleasantly surprised to find it much easier than I had anticipated. I do not find too much of a language barrier, for everyone speaks English. I found that some Hongkongese employees around the office have even studied English as their major in college. I am not sure whether or not to try out some of my Cantonese. It would surely be a source of comedic relief... I am bound to get a few laughs at any rate!

I am busy with work throughout the day, working on one long-term project and then several short-term projects that I attend to based on priority and time. My main focus is putting together the May issue of Media Mojo, the internal industry newsletter. I am responsible for finding all the articles, writing brief summaries for each, and formatting the newsletter. The main categories within the newsletter include an insight section, a top news section, a media moves and news section, a digital media section, and an awards and events section. My job is to find articles online that pertain to the categories above. They must be newsworthy and FH related. I have subscribed to several public relations newsletters and familiarized myself with public relations news websites to find content for the newsletter. My one challenge has been diversifying my news sources, as I struggle to find Asian-focused industry news compared to U.S public relations industry news.

Today I met woman who gave me great perspective on what it would be like to work internationally. Mary, from the United States began working for Fleishman-Hillard in at their headquarters in Saint Louis Missouri six years ago. Since then, she has worked in India, Hong Kong and Singapore, never looking

back. I felt inspired by her fearless ability to work all around South East Asia, but she explained to me that it has been the most exciting, eye-opening time in her life. Personally, I would love to travel and work in new places, but I worry that I would miss my family too much! She explained that although it is lonely at times, she feels so lucky at the opportunity to do so much and see so much. Mary was only in the Hong Kong office for two days for meetings, but I was able to show her around Hong Kong a bit. We went to Stanley market and I was able to hear more about her international and work experience. Mary does recruiting and other human resources functions for FH. I too am interested in human resources so it was a great opportunity for me to learn more about the field and network.

WEEK 3

It is already week three; I cannot believe how fast time flies! I have been working on a wide variety of projects for different groups around the office. Many employees around the office send me press releases and PowerPoint presentations to edit and proofread for proper use of English. I wrote my first press release for the National Geographic Channel, announcing the end of photo submissions for their 'Live Curious' photography award competition in Hong Kong. I enjoyed the experience of taking the story from start to finish, working with Debbie to edit and perfect the content. I continued to work with Cedric on finishing the Media Mojo internal newsletter. I think I finally have a handle on finding the right

stories for the right sections of the newsletter, discerning the newsworthy from the news clutter. One of my main responsibilities is to edit the body copy of case studies produced by Fleishman-Hillard. All of the case studies focus on RIM, the creator of BlackBerry wireless email solution and those who have implemented the email solution. I edit these case studies for language, correct use of trademarks and over all structure.

Besides the technical learning associated with the tasks above, simply interacting and chatting with fellow employees reveals much about the FH office in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong culture in general. I have come to realize that it is quite common for people to study in Canada and the United States for college, but return to Hong Kong to work. While in the United States it is quite common for recent college graduates to live on their own once they have secured a job, it is not the case in Hong Kong. Most of the younger employees at Fleishman Hillard still live with their parents, explaining how expensive it is to buy an apartment in Hong Kong.

Although the office is majority Hongkongese, there are many people from other places like Malaysia, Mainland China, Australia, London and New Zealand. Being one of the only Americans in the office, and a newcomer to the group, colleagues often strike up conversation with me, asking me where I am from. I said I am from New Jersey, in the U.S. One my colleagues said, “Oh is that a city by New York?” My initial reaction was to laugh and say “No, it is a state near New York!” But I caught myself, and politely said “Yes, I live near New York City”. Now, as someone from the U.S., I obviously know the states that it is

comprised of. I realized in that moment my own bias and the fact that I had expected my colleague to know exactly where I am from, yet I definitely do not know the differences between cities, or parishes, or provinces in China. I was so quick to assume that people from other countries should know all about the United States without returning the favor.

I continue to notice my American bias while surrounded by an international office. I feel that these are all good lessons for me and I hope to be more sensitive towards these issues by then end of my internship. I realize how easy it is to commit a faux faux while in a new environment full of different taboos and expectations. This experience will certainly make me more understanding and helpful towards newcomers to the United States in the future.

WEEK 4

This week, a colleague from the headquarters of Fleishman-Hillard in St. Louis, Missouri came in to the office. While on vacation in Hong Kong, she thought it would be a good experience to stop in to the office in Hong Kong and get a feel for another FH location. We gathered in the meeting room and she introduced herself. Angie had prepared a short presentation to give us an idea of the sort of projects her team works in back in the U.S. She took us on a journey describing a campaign they implemented for Poppa John's pizza company which entailed a highly tracked (by social media) road trip across the country to visit key places (farms, factories, ect.) that contribute to the company as well as a search for the owner's long lost Chevy Camaro. The campaign incorporated augmented

reality, a new technology in which live direct or an indirect view of a physical, real-world environment whose elements are augmented by computer-generated sensory input, such as sound or graphics. For the Poppa John's campaign, FH designed a Camero on top of all delivery boxes, and when placed in front of web cam, the computer was able to read this "barcode". The image of a Camero appeared on the screen that was moveable; to create the feeling that you were driving the car. This is just one example of the creative measure FH implemented for the Poppa John's campaign. Social media proved to be another integral part of the campaign, with the goal of continuously gaining attention of their target audience and generating buzz in the media.

The Hong Kong office was impressed with Angie's presentation and asked a lot of questions surrounding her use of social media in the campaign. Apparently in Hong Kong, clients are less willing to use social media than in the United States. For using a social media site, like Facebook, allows people to comment and voice their candid opinions about the said product or service. If complaints or negative comments are made, the company risks losing control of their positive image. Yet Angie pointed out that restricting this two-way communication model defeats the very purpose, and positive power of social media. She commented that Hong Kong seems to be just one year behind the U.S. in terms of social media usage by companies and their level of comfort.

I found it interesting that there seems to be a time lag between Hong Kong and the U.S. in terms of social media use. Although it seems obvious that the Hong Kong community loves and supports social media, businesses appear a bit more

cautious. I can sympathize with companies who fear losing control by giving consumers a platform to voice their opinions about the good/service, but it can also be looked at as a way to learn immediately what consumers want and don't want; it is a means to bettering your product/service.

Today I am working on drafting a press release for the Harrow International School Hong Kong. On May 26th, the school is hosting a stone laying ceremony, as the construction of the campus will be complete in September 2012. I also worked on a draft for an Investment New Zealand event invitation. My responsibility for the Media Mojo continues for the month of June. I am in the story- gathering phase. My feedback from my first newsletter was mostly positive, although I need to be careful with my formatting. I apparently changed it, which made it difficult for my advisor to fix. I am going to ask to meet with him and explain what I did wrong so I don't make the same mistake twice. I am trying to create a bit of structure in a fairly loose instruction style internship. I like constructive criticism so I can grow and improve my work.

WEEK 5

I am not quite sure how it is already the end of my final week interning with Fleishman-Hillard! My time here has absolutely flown by. As I reflect on my time here, I realize how much one can learn with first-hand experience. I have learned how to write a press release, how to call and pitch stories to journalists on behalf of clients, how to edit copy for both British and American English, how to write a plan for a client, and how to create a newsletter documenting relevant public relations news. Although we have simulated similar tasks for class, the real

experience carries far more weight. It also forces you to learn faster. I quite enjoyed this.

I found calling and pitching stories to journalists most daunting, but after practice and actually making a few pitches, I became more confident. First, one must thoroughly understand the client and the story that you are pitching for. I always highlighted and wrote down a brief summary of the story before I called a journalist. You must prepare yourself for questions, and provide accurate responses. The journalists from the Wall Street Journal and CNBC Asia will certainly be able to tell if you know what you are talking about or not. Once you track down the correct journalist who writes the beat that your story applies to, there is the ever so obvious pressure that he or she is very busy and that you better hurry up and make your point about why the story is interesting and what the angle is. You must understand that the journalist isn't going to write just anything just because it pertains to the topics they write about. There must be something noteworthy about the client or the story. For example, I was charged with the task of pitching a story for AIA and their new set of Exchange Traded Funds (ETF's). First of all, I had no idea what an ETF was. After heavy use of Google, and talking with my colleague, I started the calls. I was able to explain the story, but most of the journalists I spoke with did not find the story interesting enough (and to be honest, neither did I...) But that is just the point. It was my job to explain the story and client in a way that would catch attention. It was a good lesson on how to sell a tough project, for pitching a story is just that: sales.

Overall, I had a very positive and educational experience at Fleishman-Hillard. On top of learning how this office runs and completing my day to day tasks, I learned how to operate in an international office where the majority of people speak a different language. The local culture certainly affects the work environment as well. At times I felt like an outsider, although it wasn't intentional. It seems unbalanced for everyone else to change their normal conversation just because I cannot speak Cantonese. Most times, colleagues welcomed me into conversation by speaking in English. I was always very grateful.

The most interesting conversation with fellow colleagues occurred over lunch this week. We began to talk about politics in China verses Hong Kong and what that means for public relations. It was also interesting because the discussion encompassed both Hongkongese individuals and those from Mainland China. There was a general consensus that they preferred the Hong Kong style government, especially when talking about censorship. My disbelief toward human rights issues and the government's censorship was met with a sigh and an effort to explain why it is that way. They seemed rather resigned about the government's attitude, neither defending it strongly nor rising up in protestation. Then the focus suddenly shifted towards the United States. One colleague said, "America thinks it is the police of the world. Why do they always have to get into other people's business? Like with Osama Bin Laden. They just went in there without the permission of their government". I shifted a bit uncomfortably, and

then realized that if I am going to challenge their country, I need to be able to take their heat as well.

I replied, “I think in this case, it was personal. I realize that’s not an excuse. I myself am obviously biased, but my father was supposed to be in the World Trade Center for meeting that morning. He missed the meeting and was safe, but 9/11 will still be the scariest day of my entire life.”

I realized then that the significance of 9/11 may not be as strong for someone in China, and I questioned myself if I batted an eyelash toward the earthquake in China in 2008 before the Olympics. I also balked at the reaction to Bin Laden’s death. Rumors circulated around the office that the terrorist had been dead a long time, and that the U.S. government was releasing the information now with an ulterior motive. I found this unthinkable, knowing that the press in the U.S. and the government for that matter, would never allow such corruption. Skepticism about the “sea burial” fueled the discussion, and I was stunned at my resolute trust in the press compared to my colleagues. Regardless of the truth, it was sobering to hear news about the United States discussed by an international office.

Chapter 3: Public Relations and Globalization

Thus far, we consider public relations in China mainland and Hong Kong through a thoroughly western lens. Relying solely on Grunig and Hunt's four models of PR becomes problematic considering the global nature of today's society. As the world becomes more interconnected and collaborative, such a narrow, ethnocentric view of PR may become irrelevant.

Larissa and James Grunig recognize this fast changing element in PR today, explaining that publics throughout the world affect most organizations either by competition, or by collaborative organizations. Because of this "it becomes imperative for public relations professionals to have a broad perspective that will allow them to work in many countries- or to work collaboratively with public relations professionals, employees or customers from many countries" (Grunig, p. 541). The reality of globalization brings about an interesting question. Should the principles and practices of public relations be the same, regardless of the country in which they are practiced? The Grunigs argue that PR would not be a profession if it had to be practiced differently in each country, but perhaps bearing greater weight, "...there is a great danger of ethnocentrism if scholars and practitioner from one country, region or cultural grouping decide that their way of practicing public relations is most appropriate for all other parts of the world" (Grunig, 5p. 42). Furthermore, the authors discuss that it is particularly dangerous to practice ethnocentrism in public relations because PR is often said to have began and developed in the United States, a country that is "notoriously ethnocentric"

(Grunig, p. 542).

The authors explain that presently, research shows that globally, most public relations practice does in fact fall into the four models described by Grunig and Hunt. The press agency/publicity model is most common, including in the United States. They conclude explaining the dangers of ethnocentrism, saying that the ethnocentric nature of the United States may have negatively influenced the practice of public relations, and the U.S. is complicit in disseminating this outdated and “superficial” model to practitioners in other countries. In “Global Public Relations: Spanning Borders, Spanning Cultures”, the authors point out that in today’s increasingly integrated world economically and socially, there is an urgent need for dialogue and cooperation across different cultures and groups of people with ways of thinking. Furthermore, the authors indicate that “[m]odern public relations, with communication and management as its core, provides guidance...in building/managing/softening relationships across borders” (Freitag, p. 137).

Causes of Globalization and PR Implications

Sriramesh agrees with the Grunigs’ and Freitag’s assertions that the industry has entered a new reality of needing a global application of public relations. He writes,

“The body of knowledge of public relations had remained largely ethnocentric until the mid 1990s when greater emphasis began to be placed on diversifying scholarship by studying the practice in other parts of the world as well. The pace

of this process has increased in the 21st century even though we are far from calling the body of knowledge or practice holistic. Globalisation is to be credited for moving the public relations body of knowledge toward greater cultural relativism in order to make it more relevant to practitioners who are faced with the challenge of communicating effectively with the diverse publics of the emerging markets of Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa.

In the quote above, Sriramesh identifies the obvious ethnocentric approach to public relations prevalent in both the scholarship and application of public relations. Only in the 90's did academics and firm management begin to reassess the scope of the industry's practice. The author cites three major developments that led to the globalization of public relations. First, in the final decade of the 20th century, a major elimination of trade barriers among several key nations occurred. This allowed countries to begin trading within and amongst trading blocs such as such as the North American Free Trade Agreement - NAFTA, European Commission - EC and the Association of South-East Asian Nations - ASEAN, rather than as nation-states. The rapid creation of trading blocks beginning in 1992 increased the cross-cultural interaction globally, and changed to the face of relevant publics in terms of consumers, activists, employees and members of the media.

Next, Sriramesh explains that the second major factor contributing to globalization in general, and then to the globalization of the communications industry was the "onset and development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)- a trend that also began in the early 1990s but has developed by leaps and bounds in the first decade of the new millennium (such as the emergence of social media, for instance)" (Sriramesh, p. 2). The development of

technology created a demand for goods and services globally, and facilitated an easier, faster and cheaper delivery. This ease of communication across distances that previously slowed or prohibited the incentive to exchange and within across trading blocs fueled the necessity for a more global approach to communication and to effective public relations

The concept that the human race is a part of a global village fuels the final need and emergence of a global method to public relations. This recognition amongst countries that universal problems exist and need to be addressed together has increased in the 20th and 21st century. Issues like “environmental pollution, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and overpopulation resulting in poverty and hunger” are just some examples of issues that have a global impact, bringing countries together, willing or not (Sriramesh, p.2). These transcending problems have lead to increased international communication, and therefore cross cultural communication. According to Sriramesh, “[t]herein lies the nexus between public relations (as communication activity) and globalization" (Sriramesh, p.3).

Contextual Indicators for a Global Practice

In addition to the environmental, and economical forces driving the trend towards a global public relations model or discussion, the scholarship aspect or academic side of public relations began to evolve as well in the 1990s and push traditional models of the industry. Sriramesh identifies two major factors that contributed to this change. The first, mentioned in the beginning of the paper, is the Excellence Project, conducted by Larissa and James Grunig; and the second is

the steady increase of non-US graduate students studying public relations in US universities. Larissa and James move beyond the realization of the need for a more, global, holistic approach, and seek to identify the key indicators to take into consideration when approaching public relations in different countries or cultures. The authors propose that scholars construct a normative theory of “excellent global public relations” through the following six contextual conditions one must take into account on a global stage:

- Culture, including language
- The political system
- The economic system
- The media system
- The level of economic development
- The extent and nature of activism

The Grunigs conducted several tests to see if these six conditions are actually generic principles of public relations and are important factors globally. One test theory executed in Korea in 1999 found that symmetrical public relations had been adapted to fit Confucian culture, “with its emphasis on hierarchical relationships combined with collective responsibility” (Grunig, p. 545). The authors point out that it is essential to start with the generic principles above, but remain open to the change and update of these concepts so that they are global and not ethnocentric. In 1996, the authors spoke with the management team of a public relations firm in Slovenia to find out if these principles are indeed generic or universal. They asked how the firm adapted the principles in their country and to suggest changes or adding principles. The interviews “confirmed the importance of existing principles...[and] suggested a new generic principle:

Ethics is a necessary component of excellent public relations” (Grunig, p. 545).

The Slovenian firm members explained that in the post-socialist context of Slovenia, corruption was pervasive as well as the ever-present suspicion of corruption. For this reason, the firm suggested that ethics in public relations is crucial and essential to the practice and should be added to the principles of excellent public relations. The tests in both Korea and Slovenia suggest that political and cultural contextual conditions vary in importance, depending on the country or the state public relations is practiced in. Although the Grunigs may put forth six contextual factors to universally consider across the globe, the importance of each may differ.

In the following reflection, I address several of these key contextual factors in a reflection of two weeks spent in China Mainland:

Personal Discoveries

As I reflected upon our trip to Mainland China, I felt overwhelmed at the prospect of tying together all of the places we visited, the people we interacted with, and the new concepts I learned into one generalized experience. I faltered at the prospect of explaining how the three cities, representing the past, present, and future were so different from one another yet still possessed a distinct thread of similarities. I needed to substantiate this connection and put into words the underlying values I observed throughout Mainland China. As a public relations and policy studies dual major, it is so important for me to be able to understand an audience and communicate. Whether my job is to develop relationships between

an organization and its publics or to create new policies for a community, understanding how to connect with people in a different culture is absolutely essential. Joffre's (program leader) words came to mind as I pondered. She had said, "China is a push and pull between Western values and Confucius tradition- especially Feng Shui". I think that the mystique of Feng Shui extends past a solely aesthetic interpretation and permeates all aspects of Chinese culture. I have never studied Feng Shui or Confucius tradition, but I can recognize the presence of something different and unique in the Chinese culture that I have never experienced in the United States. Realizing the importance of these traditions, I became intrigued by the foundational theories of Feng Shui and perhaps how they relate to my own observations and experiences in Mainland China. My limited knowledge of this ancient system of beliefs understands that Feng Shui uses the laws of both Heaven and Earth to help improve one's life. Both literally and figuratively, I find connection between these principles and the architecture, social movements, and even the economic state of the country. Keeping in mind the theories of Qi and Yin and Yang, I have begun to sew together my understanding of Chinese culture.

QI- Discovering balance in body and buildings

To my knowledge and from what I have read, Qi involves a positive or negative force and mostly deals with energy. It refers to the orientation of a structure and the way it interacts with its environment. This energy also relates to

Chinese martial arts, or Tai Chi Chuan. It is my observation that people strive for a balance of energy in their own bodies and in their surroundings.

I first began noticing the importance of Qi within the Chinese culture when Brian Chang from the School of Architecture at Tsinghua University came to speak with our group in Beijing. He explained that even in ancient times, the architects were conscious and deliberate in the Qi of their structures. Brian spoke of the Forbidden City and its ordered special sequence. The freedom of space blended with the slight disorder offers a possibility of personal perception of the space. The architects of the city also incorporated the element of environmental awareness, for the city had the ability to capture the nature surrounding it as well. The flying or floating Chinese roof provides a connection between the sky and the earth. The roof bridges the mortal with the divine. Brian then spoke of Chinese architecture's departure from the traditional due to foreign influence – mostly American and then European design in the eighties and nineties. Now, China seeks to find its modern architectural identity and is making great strides. He focused on one event in particular that clearly demonstrates how elements of Qi and Feng Shui remain at the core of Chinese identity and strive to find its place in modern culture as well. For the Beijing Grand National Theatre, a French design by Paul Andrew was chosen. The firm was well-known for its nuclear power plants. Although impressive looking from the outside, Brian explained that the interior did not reflect its exterior- which is something all buildings should accomplish. I think he was also insinuating that this lack of continuity from the inside of the building to the outside of the building created negative Qi. Its

orientation does not have balance, and is therefore faulted. Brian then compared the opera house to a successful piece of architecture- the Beijing National Stadium (the Bird's Nest). Our guest speaker explained that while it is similar to the opera house, the Bird's Nest projects the same message inside and out. I dare to conclude that the Bird's Nest possesses good Qi.

Perhaps even more important than the finding Qi in architecture, I observed how individuals find great importance in participating in activities that will provide balance in one's body. It was quite common to see men and women exercising in the park in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings. Despite the cool weather, crowds gathered to dance or participate in Chinese martial arts. I found this impressive and surprising because such activity rarely occurs in the community that I am from. The concepts of Taiji appears in both Taoist and Confucian philosophy and therefore has evolved in easy agreement into Chinese culture. The practice of martial arts and similar health promoting activities may be far more ingrained in the culture than any other comparable practice in the United States. I am sure that it is of no coincidence that there are far fewer individuals with obesity issues in China compared to that of the U.S. We had the exciting opportunity to learn Tai chi chuan from a master. Despite being significantly older than everyone in the group, she moved so lithely and smoothly that I would have guessed her to be much younger. As I watched the master demonstrate the steps, I thought her movement to be graceful yet strong. It resembled a dance, but it was a dance with a purpose of survival and combat. Then it was our turn to try. I found the moves and steps very challenging! I am sure it was very humorous to

watch the group of 30 students attempting Tai chi. To a foreign eye, these physical practices seem strange and confusing, but taking into consideration the core values and importance of Feng Shui helped me to better understand Chinese culture.

Ying and Yang- Observing forces of opposition

The next theory (Ying and yang) expresses the concept of polarity. As Joffre has explained the Five Elements or Forces that are essential to human life. These include: metal, earth, fire, water, and wood. The goal of Ying and Yang is to find a balance between opposing forces.

I think it is fascinating to find the concept of Ying and Yang at the core of Chinese culture. After visiting the three different cities in Mainland China, I can see where this theory is successful in practice and where it is being challenged in the political, social, and economic spheres of the country. Applied in a figurative sense, I find China to possess many dichotomous characteristics. Coming from a democratic country, it is a challenge for me to reconcile these differences and I continue to seek understanding.

Politically, China successfully manages two contrasting governments. Upon my arrival in Hong Kong, I tried to understand how China could have both a communist government as well as two special administrative regions. In Hong Kong I felt little difference in freedoms and the government compared to that in the states. I wasn't expecting much of a change in Mainland China. I truly underestimated the frustration I would soon experience concerning human rights

and most specifically the contradiction and strange duality of sentiments towards the Tiananmen Massacre (or should I say *incident*). Thousands were killed in the square, yet a huge portrait of Mao looms over the space with an air of commemoration and respect. It was not until Lucy, our tour guide, shared a personal conversation she once had with her father that I could begin to see how Confucian ideals could support Mao's communist regime. Lucy's father felt that although extreme in his ways, Mao's regime offered equality. Everyone had the same during that time compared with the present class disparity and the growing gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Our trip out into the country in Xian surely demonstrates this class divide. Because Confucian tradition promotes righteousness and the pursuit of a path that benefits the greater good, it is easy to see how China transitioned easily towards socialism. I now better understand how populations of individuals who already believe in the key concepts of socialism prefer a communist state to a democracy that caters to self-interest and greed.

Art Zone 798 in the Dashanzi Art District of Beijing demonstrates yet another example of polarity in China. When in a country that I thought to silence all attempts of rebellion and speech, I was shocked to see such provocative and politically fueled works of art. Although artwork is usually open to interpretation, it was hard to ignore the messages many of the pieces projected to the audience. For example, I particularly remember an exhibit that filled the entire room with a plastic stage. It was painted in the colors of the communist party complete with the iconic stars on the corners of the stage. An undistinguishable white substance leaked out from behind the curtain and on to the stage. The description of the

piece of art was extremely vague. It talked about the interpretation of space and line but provided no explanation or hint towards the meaning behind the strange exhibit. It was clearly a parody or social comment on the party, and I was surprised to see it allowed. I suppose that as long as the description remains ambiguous and does not blatantly attack the government, the art can remain. Joffre also pointed out that the area enjoys more liberal privilege because of the involvement of foreign professors and benefactors. Zone 798 demonstrates a social movement going against the government within Mainland China that has refused to keep their thoughts to themselves. It is evident that a population exists that feels slighted, mistreated, ignored, and wants change. It was so refreshing to see this freedom of speech through art.

Comparing the economic development across Xiian, Beijing, and Shanghai cities reveals differing priorities and goals. Xian struggles with preserving its history verses developing economically. While the city needs modernization to support tourism, tearing down the city to make room for new buildings eliminates the core reasons for visiting Xian. Even Beijing struggles with economic imbalance. According to Michael Britow's article, "China to address economic imbalance", Beijing's Central Business District resides right next to a small area of low-rise slum housing. Luxury hotels and offices show signs of economic growth, but the poor areas illustrate that not everyone is benefitting from the perceived growth in Beijing. While Xian still holds on to its historical sites, Shanghai has taken the opposite approach. As Antoaneta discusses in "Shanghaied into modernity" "[d]uring the past 15 years of breakneck

economic growth, countless colonial-era neighborhoods have been annihilated and swathes of historical sites have been razed to make way for office towers, residential blocks, and highways”. Visiting Shanghai, especially the financial district, I can now attest this to be true. The skyscrapers are numerous as they are tall. The city does not appear to be stopping growth either; there is construction everywhere. This push and pull dynamic continues the motif of ying and yang within modern Chinese culture.

Traveling to Mainland China for two weeks challenged me to shed my American lens full of Western expectations and norms. The trip became much more enjoyable once I realized that I would have to start at the very core of Chinese culture in order to begin to understand their politics, architecture, economic goals and social trends. I look forward to the rest of my semester in Hong Kong to further explore China and understand all of its pushes and pulls, its balance, ying and yang.

The above personal observation reflects my direct account as I begin to understand how contextual indicators affect the use and need for public relations. Without the understanding of some of the themes I suggest in the above excerpt, a western lens of evaluation may misconstrue many of their practices. Passing the judgement of a “right or wrong” practice becomes irrelevant, as the culture, politics, and economics of the country relativize the nature and use of public relations.

Beyond

Sriramesh confirms that public relations must be viewed with a more holistic approach, while taking into consideration the unique needs of contextual factors. The scholar offers the following definition to view public relations with a global perspective:

“Public relations is the strategic communication that different types of organisations use for establishing and maintaining symbiotic relationships with relevant publics many of whom are increasingly becoming culturally diverse” (Sriramesh, p. 2).

In a more recent study on global public relations, the public relations practitioner and scholar, Ni Chen, provides a comparative analysis. Chen references Scholar Sriramesh in her analysis, agreeing that a nation’s culture shapes its public relations practice. This basis of contention helps formulate the several cultural dimensions that influence public relations in China today. In addition, Chen’s study addresses four of the Grunigs’ six factors, (China’s political, economic, cultural and media systems,) which provide context for the explanation for China’s development of public relations.

Through my personal observations of China mainland and Hong Kong, interviews with public relations professionals in the region, as well as literary analysis, it appears that China and Hong Kong have both experienced a distinct evolution in the public relations sphere. From a western perspective, China lags

behind Hong Kong in terms of demonstrating a more transparent, two-way symmetrical model of the practice. Yet to pass such a judgment bears witness to an ethnocentric, Anglo philosophy, which may not be appropriate for all cultures. Furthermore, the debate between ethnocentric and global public relations practice demonstrates that much of the study and discussion is relative and impacted by the cultural and societal bias of those conducting the studies and observations.

Globalization has certainly highlighted the key differences in practice between the two entities, yet also points out the ramifications of having “one country, two systems”. It becomes clear, that the alleged public relations examples of failure suggested in this body of research do not take into account the Chinese or Hongkongese measures of success. With contextual factors differing across the globe, we observe the clash of principles as globalization drives cross cultural communication. Yet it is in this new space that countries have the opportunity to observe other practices of public relations, look internally at its own practices, and evolve as appropriate to its contextual factors. The once rigid and closed region of China has opened its doors to modernity; this fact in itself will continue to drive the public relations practice to a more professional sphere with a new global lens.

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Summary of Capstone Project

While in Hong Kong in the spring of 2011, I utilized the time to conduct research for my Honors Capstone project. Through literary research and interviews with public relations professionals, professors, and members/directors of public relations associations such as the Council of Public Relations Firms of Hong Kong, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the public relations industry in Hong Kong and China mainland. My paper focuses on the evolution of public relations in China and Hong Kong through first a western lens, and then explores the idea of a global public relations practice.

My first research topic focuses on understanding the development of public relations in China and Hong Kong from the perspective of a western model. Specifically, I use James Grunick and Todd Hunt's four models of public relations to assess the past and present state of China's public relations practices. The four main models are as follows:

Press Agency: The objective is publicity. The main focus entails making sure people hear the information and gaining attention. It is purely one-way, from the organization to its public. Little research is involved. American circus owner PT Barnum employed the classic example of press agency. Copying politicians at the time, PT Barnum used stunts and gimmicks to garner attention, often spewing highly exaggerated claims and promises to his audience.

Public Information: The focus is on the accurate dissemination of information. The communication flow remains one-way. The public relations professional conducts research on the readability and level of comprehension of their message to its publics. Public service announcements are a very basic example of public information.

Advocacy: This model seeks to modify the attitudes of its publics and influence their behavior. The communication flow is two-way asymmetrical, as researchers focus on the attitude and opinion of the publics' reaction to the communicated message.

Relationship building: Mutual understanding between the organization and its publics becomes the main priority as well as mediating conflict resolution. There is a two-way symmetrical flow of communication. Research focuses on the perception and values of its publics. (*Grunig and Hunt, 1984*).

Through case studies and the use of scholarly journals, I draw comparisons to China and Hong Kong throughout their history of public relations development. In addition, I analyze the organizations and accreditation opportunities in these two regions, comparing them to that of western institutions. For example, in the United States, public relations practitioners seek the accreditation of organizations such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). To better understand the firms operating in the area, I interviewed public relations practitioners from Burson-Marsteller and Fleishman-Hillard to learn more about the principles most important to public relations in China and Hong Kong. I was also able to find out how they adapted to a different culture and

changed some of the firm's principles and ideologies in order to suit the needs of their clients in Hong Kong.

During my research and time spent in Hong Kong, I found that such an ethnocentric approach to evaluating public relations practice has become dated in this new age of globalization. This ethnocentric approach, suggesting an attitude that one's own group is superior, prohibits a more diverse, global perspective to public relations. In my third chapter, I analyze the dangers of an ethnocentric approach, or the assumption that all practitioners around the globe should practice a western model of public relations. My analysis calls upon public relations scholars who suggest a more global approach and the main factors that influence its use. I conclude that measuring the evolution of public relations through a western standard does not always accurately capture the practice and meaning of its use in other cultures. It is the global exchange and observation of public relations practiced differently around the world that will continue to develop towards a best practice for each country or culture.

This project is significant as it takes in to consideration both the positives and negatives of a western versus global approach to the public relations practice. Furthermore, I provide historical context to the discussion of the industry to better understand the present state of public relations in the China mainland and Hong Kong. My thesis brings together several notable scholars as well as industry practitioners to share opinions on the development of public relations in the industry. Through the literary analysis, personal observations and interviews, I

draw several conclusions, yet acknowledge that that the continuously changing industry prohibits any one, resolute answer. Furthermore, the debate between ethnocentric and global public relations practice demonstrates that much of the study and discussion is relative and impacted to the cultural and societal bias of those conducting the studies and observations. I look forward to the continued discussion of the evolution of public relations, especially in China mainland and Hong Kong.